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Noises and Interruptions – The Road to Democracy

Wai-man Lam
Hsin-Chi Kuan

Chinese University of Hong Kong

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Noises and Interruptions – the Road to Democracy

Lam Wai-man and Kuan Hsin-chi

Introduction

Scholars have experimented with various characterizations of Hong Kong's political culture: apathetic, utilitarian, alienated, populist, cynical, depoliticized, and so on.[1] All attempt to answer why large-scale collective mobilization has been relatively rare in the territory. In this study, we seek to clarify the local understanding and degree of commitment to democracy. Based on a sample survey conducted in 2001,[2] it depicts the extent of acquisition and consolidation of democratic values in Hong Kong. In attempting to explain the antecedents to the acquisition and consolidation of democratic values, we will examine findings on the people's assessment of democracy in their governmental system (past and present), their sense of empowerment and perceived system responsiveness, perception of democratic performance, and their trust in institutions. These conditions and the extent of acquisition of democratic values in Hong Kong throw light on the challenges that Hong Kong faces in furthering democracy and the prospects for expanding the present limited democratic rule. Finally, the paper gives an account of the people's perceptions of the prospects of democracy in Hong Kong.

While a complete democracy in Hong Kong is yet to be achieved, this should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment by the people. As a matter of fact, this study finds that the Hong Kong people have a passion for democracy, whether procedurally or substantively understood, although a segment of the population does not always consider it preferable. Additionally, they have made strong demands on the government with regards to its democratic performance. External political factors, which tend to act beyond the people's wishes, have played an important role in creating a detour to partial democracy[3] in Hong Kong. In light of the people's ambivalence about the possible conflicts of democratization with economic development and efficiency, and their sense of political powerlessness, we may say that they also have had a part to play.

Noises and Interruptions

Hong Kong is a case that testifies to the limitations of the modernization theory of democratization. Despite its fulfillment of the prerequisite socio-economic conditions of democratization from the 1970s onward, Hong Kong has still not installed a full democracy. Before the 1980s, the Urban Council, a local assembly with limited jurisdictions, was the only government body that consisted of elected members. In 1973, the maximum number of eligible voters was likely less than 600,000 out of a population of around three million. The colonial Hong Kong government did not introduce democratic reforms in Hong Kong until 1981. The 1981 White Paper on "District Administration in Hong Kong" represented a turning point in government policy, introducing universal suffrage into Hong Kong's elections. A District Board (subsequently renamed the District Council) was established in each district. Members were directly elected to their post. All citizens were eligible to participate in District Board elections, held every three years. Now composed of 519 seats with 390 elected, the District Council elections still represent an important element of direct representation available to Hong Kong citizens in addition to the Legislative Council elections. The Legislative Council did not have an election component until 1985, ushered in by the colonial government's White Paper of 1984 on "The Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong." Then, an indirect election element was introduced by giving members of the District Boards, the Urban and Regional Councils,[4] and functional constituencies the right to return twenty-four out of fifty-six seats in the Legislative Council.

Beyond the scope of various democratization theories, external political factors have played a significant part in the interrupted history of democratization in colonial Hong Kong.[5] Due to the bitter Sino-British row over the future of Hong Kong, as well as the cleavages among key stakeholders, the democratic project only resulted in a partial democracy. It was not until 1991 that the Hong Kong government allocated eighteen seats for direct election by geographical constituencies to the sixty-member Legislative Council. Indirectly elected functional constituency seats were increased to twenty-one with the number of officials decreased to four. This reform was in line with what the Basic Law[6] promised, although falling far behind the people's aspirations.

With the arrival of the new Hong Kong Governor, Chris Patten, in 1992, some significant political and administrative reforms, indirectly resonating with the people's desires for

democracy, were introduced. Although Patten could do little to bring about a more democratic political system, he managed to work within the limits of the Basic Law to give Hong Kong's people a taste of a senate that is much more democratic. For example, in the 1995 Legislative Council election, apart from the twenty seats for direct election by geographical constituencies, functional constituency seats were increased from twenty-one to thirty. Also, with the redefinition of functional constituency, more than 1.1 million eligible voters, out of around 2.7 million, were entitled to participate in the functional constituency elections. In the 1991 election, only around 70,000 people were eligible for this. All official and appointed seats in the Council were abolished. The central government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) viewed all of these proto-democratic moves with suspicion, just as they did the supporters of democracy in Hong Kong. As tensions heightened in 1996, China inaugurated an appointed Provisional Legislative Council that was returned in 1995 and supposed to expire in 1999. Once again, Hong Kong's political fate was in the hands of its sovereign governments, as it had been at the time of the formation of the British colony a century and a half earlier.

The Basic Law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (henceforth HKSAR) enacted in 1990 envisages a gradual and controlled program of democratic transition. Universal suffrage is proclaimed as the long-term goal. In the interim until the year of 2007, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR is to be indirectly elected by an Election Committee of delegates who are in turn selected on the principle of functional representation. The legislature is to be filled by sixty members returned by three different constituencies: the above-mentioned Election Committee, functional constituencies, and geographical constituencies. To ensure an executive-led government and to prevent the popularly elected politicians from controlling a legislative majority, the proportion of seats directly elected from geographical constituencies may be slowly expanded up to one half of the membership of the legislature in 2007. However, the nature of election in such a partial democracy is not to form the government. Election is not a contest between the incumbent rulers and the challengers, therefore it does not serve to ensure political accountability. Apart from the denial of universal suffrage and violation of the principle of "one man, one vote," the Basic Law also stipulates severe limitations on the legislature's constitutional competence. Legislators are not allowed to introduce bills related to public expenditure, or political structure, or the operation of the government. Nor may they introduce bills relating to government policies without the written consent of the Chief Executive. In addition, for a private member's bill to be passed, a majority vote of both the category of directly elected lawmakers and the other categories of non-directly elected

lawmakers is required.

A weak legislature goes well with a strong executive, that in Hong Kong, is recognized as a system with an executive-led government. Under this system, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, like the Governor during the colonial era, is the head of the region. While the appointed members of the Executive Council assist the Chief Executive in policymaking, the day-to-day government operation is left to the discretion of the civil servants, supposedly politically neutral, who thus would function with optimum efficiency. In 2002, Tung Chee-hwa implemented the Accountability System for Principal Officials. The membership of the Executive Council now comprises fourteen Principal Officials and five non-officials. They make politically sensitive decisions and shoulder all political responsibilities. Without adequate legislative checks and balances on the executive, many in Hong Kong see this system as dangerous: Tung can control who is in or out of the power circle.

Hong Kong has had a robust but divided civil society, which helps to explain why massive democratization movements did not happen. Before political parties burgeoned in the 1980s as a result of the introduction of partial elections, Hong Kong had numerous social organizations and an active mass media, most of which were popularly labeled by their political alignment with respective regimes as left, right or center. Never short of politics, the territory was notorious for the struggle between supporters of the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang for political hegemony. On top of these politics, Hong Kong has had a historically liberal tradition, ushered in by the Reform Association of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Civic Association, and handed down by a colonial governance that exalted a free Hong Kong individuality while denouncing a collective communist identity.[7] This liberal tradition sheds lights on the people's strong passion for freedom and rights as found in this study.

The political groups and parties that have emerged since the 1980s are more or less organized for the purpose of winning the limited governmental power open to them through electoral means. Together they represent various sections of the public and diverse political views, but are basically differentiable by the extent to which they are pro-establishment or pro-democracy—although this is not the only line of cleavage in Hong Kong.[8] For instance, the Democratic Party, a merger of the former Meeting Point and United Democrats, is critical toward both the Chinese and Hong Kong governments, and supports a quicker pace of democratization. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong comprises local

affiliates to Beijing and has been a stable pro-government force. The Liberal Party is composed mainly of businesspeople and usually adopts a pro-government stand. While the political divisions in society have rendered consolidation of a strong democratic force difficult, the limited membership in the existing political parties has also made them weak leaders toward democratization in Hong Kong.[9]

Unlike some other countries, Hong Kong is a partial democracy, the problem for Hong Kong is not about democratic consolidation or improving the quality of democracy, but completing democratic installation. Although the relations among economic development, political culture and democracy are indeterminate,[10] the public's belief in democratic legitimacy matters in democratic transition. Democratic legitimacy, defined as citizen's belief in the legitimacy of or the commitment to democracy as the most preferred regime type, serves as a critical condition of successful democratization.[11] How do the people feel about this partial democracy? Do they want further democratization? Answers to these questions shed light on the prospects for expanding Hong Kong's partial democracy. In the following discussion, we will look at the features of Hong Kong's democratic culture. As we will show, although politically frustrated, Hong Kong's people have not given up their aspiration for democracy.

Hybridity and Ambivalence in Hong Kong's Democratic Culture

This section will investigate the local conception of democracy and the various dimensions of democratic commitment in Hong Kong, including how far various authoritarian alternatives are rejected, and the desirability, preferability, suitability, priority and efficacy of democracy.

The Hybridity of the Understandings of Democracy

Table 1 shows that democracy is largely understood in liberal terms as freedom and liberty (60.7 percent) that, in the Hong Kong data set, includes mostly responses of freedom of speech, press, association, belief, and individual choice. This soaring figure is likely due to the historical liberal tradition in Hong Kong where the colonial government was more willing to offer freedom than political rights, the legacy of a society consisting largely of immigrants who escaped from the China mainland to Hong Kong in pursuit of a better life, and thus love of

freedom has become an intrinsic element of the local identity. Along with this, we see another significant percentage under "other abstract and positive terms" (19.3 percent). This category, upon further analysis, is found to comprise mostly understandings of democracy as preservation of democratic style in society such as in communication, compromise, tolerance and rationality. Relatively scant attention is paid to democratic institutions and processes (11.8 percent), which consists of understandings of democracy as, for example, election and a competitive party system.

Although the ideas of freedom, liberty, and democratic institutions and processes are closely tied to each other, they refer to separate phases of democratization. Scholars have pointed out that the differentiation of liberal and democratic notions in understandings of democracy is significant as this delineates both the distinctiveness and interconnectedness of the processes of liberalization and democratization. While liberalization refers to the fight for a system of government that guarantees individual liberty and rights, democratization has a clear purpose of making a system of government representative of the whole population through introducing competitive elections. Without liberalization, democratization may exist just in form. Without democratization, liberalization may be easily manipulated and retracted.[12] The processes of liberalization and democratization may converge if actors consider the rule by the people the best way to guarantee individual liberty and rights.

However, such a convergence appears remote in Hong Kong as reflected from the above discussion that ideas of freedom and liberty predominate in local conceptions of democracy. Further, by regrouping the various understandings of democracy into the categories of liberal democratic, liberal, democratic, and neither liberal nor democratic, Chart 1 demonstrates the extent to which the respondents view democracy in liberal and/or democratic terms.[13] Democracy in Hong Kong is viewed predominantly in liberal (45.9 percent) rather than democratic (7.7 percent) or liberal democratic (3.7 percent) terms.

Apart from the category of "liberal," another category stands out in Chart 1, which is the understanding of democracy as "neither liberal nor democratic" (42.7 percent). This category comprises notions of democracy as social equality and justice, social entitlements, government for the people that is responsive to their needs, and others. It testifies to the substantive emphasis of the local understanding of democracy which compete with the liberal emphasis.

Specifically, Table 1 shows that the category of social equality and justice is a significant understanding of democracy in Hong Kong (18.1 percent). This category includes primarily the choices of social equality and social justice, social rights and entitlements, and equality of opportunities. The category of "others" (13.9 percent) similarly testifies to the substantive emphasis of the local understanding of democracy. Half of the responses in this category recognize democracy as direct participation, demonstration and voicing one's concern. On the other hand, ideas of democracy in Hong Kong are interestingly close to the concept of *min-ben* in traditional Chinese political culture. *Min-ben* means a government for the people and refers to substantive outcomes of governance. As shown in Table 1, the item of generic/populist terms, comprising chiefly understandings of democracy as government for the people that is responsive to their needs, cares for people, and governs in their interest, constitutes 16.4 percent out of the total responses. In this light, a substantial proportion of the respondents view democracy in substantive terms, as a political opportunity to create caring institutions that are also capable of generating structural fairness.

So, the Hong Kong notion of democracy is both liberal and substantive in emphasis but also manifests, marginally, supports for democratic rights and institutions. It interestingly contains both westernized traits of individualism and traditional Chinese cultural definitions of good governance. These findings point to the importance of strengthening the democratic notions, relative to the liberal notions, in local understandings of democracy to cultivate a more perfect commitment to democratization among the people of Hong Kong.

As alluded to in the above, the hybridity of the Hong Kong notion of democracy is bred within the history of the territory. On the one hand, the historical nature of Hong Kong as an immigrant society, where Hong Kong's older generations fled from communist rule to Hong Kong for individual and familial development, has foreshadowed the people's love for freedom and liberty. Hong Kong's people have had experiences with China. What China has set, however, is a counter-role-model of governance. Along with these, the development of the city into a cosmopolitan where the colonial Hong Kong government promoted a laissez-faire policy and market ideology prevails also helps to constitute a cultural attachment to freedom and liberty. On the other hand, Hong Kong is a Chinese society, and it is no surprise that the people still have a tendency to look up to a traditional Chinese model of good governance of *min-ben*. The colonial experience of the people has further reinforced their wishes for substantive democracy, which is a political opportunity to create caring institutions and generate more

structural fairness.

The Ambivalence Toward Democracy: Desirable but Not Always Suitable

While hybridity is a salient characteristic of the democratic culture in Hong Kong, ambivalence is another. The following discussion will show that, although the people desire democracy as an ideal, it is not considered always suitable, for reason of conflict of values.

There is no doubt that the people of Hong Kong aspire to democracy in principle. In our survey, respondents were asked to indicate how much democracy they want Hong Kong to achieve on a ten-point scale with "1" denoting complete dictatorship and "10" complete democracy. No less that 40.5 percent of them want "complete democracy" and 42.6 percent want "close to complete democracy," that is, from points eight to nine inclusive (Chart 2).

To depict the extent of democratic progress toward the political system wanted by our respondents, we compared their ratings of how much democracy they want Hong Kong to achieve with how democratic the present Hong Kong is. The positive difference between the two scores, ranging from one to nine, connotes the extent of democratic progress wanted. The result is very impressive: 93.7 percent of them desire the current political system to change for the better.

Given their passion for democracy, it is no surprise that the people of Hong Kong disliked many hypothetical[14] authoritarian alternatives of governance. There is a strong consensus against the personal rule by a strong leader (82.4 percent), one-party rule (77.1 percent), military rule (94.3 percent), and rule by experts (85.4 percent). On comparison, respondents feel more resistance to military rule than to one-party-rule. A great majority of the cases (70.8 percent) reject three or all four undemocratic alternatives.

Despite the people's love for democracy, it is not considered necessarily suitable to Hong Kong. On a ten-point scale that runs from "1" for total unsuitability of democracy for Hong Kong to "10" for total suitability, 48.7 percent of respondents gave eight through ten, indicating that there are half of them who find democracy very suitable for Hong Kong. A significant proportion of our respondents hesitate to select democracy unconditionally although most of them want complete or close to complete democracy (Chart 2). Why is this? What are

the barriers to the people's total endorsement of democracy as suitable for Hong Kong?

The people's ambivalence about democracy is also revealed by another set of figures (Table 2). When asked in the context of alternative forms of government, or alternative values, democracy does not necessarily enjoy priority in the eyes of the public. Only about half of the respondents consider democracy always preferable to any other kind of government (45.7 percent). The figure ranks the second lowest, higher than that of Taiwan but lower than all other Asian countries in comparison. For another one-third of the respondents (36.3 percent), it does not matter whether government is democratic or not, and about one-fifth (18.1 percent) would prefer an authoritarian government under some circumstances. In this regard, opinion is quite divided.

Although complete or close democracy is wanted, some people would give it up when situations involving other considerations making democracy a lesser or less urgent value. So, at most, the figures illustrate divided opinions over conflict of values. At worst, some values are considered more important than democracy. What are these considerations? What are the situations that prompt people to relinquish democracy?   We designed a number of questions to probe these conflicts between democracy and other considerations. With regards to whether democracy can solve social problems, we encountered another division. About half of respondents think it can (47.8 percent), as against the other half (52.2 percent) who think it cannot.[15] Again, Hong Kong ranks the lowest in this regard among the countries in comparison. The opinion on the issue of democracy versus strong government with authority was equally divided with 48.7 percent for democracy and 51.3 percent for a strong government with authority.[16]

However, the respondents are extremely unified in their view of the relative importance of economic development. Less than one-tenth (9 percent) regard democracy as more important than economic development. The rest believe the reverse to be true (79.5 percent), or that both are equally important (11.5 percent). In the same vein, 80.9 percent of the respondents preferred an efficient but insufficiently democratic government to a government that is democratic but inefficient, as against 19.1 percent who opted otherwise.

The above findings expose those value conflicts that may have informed the respondents' weak commitment to democracy as the best political regime under all conditions. Among these

competing values, economic and efficiency considerations are overwhelming across all groups holding different views of democracy. The overall percentage of cases that accentuate the relative importance of economic development is 80 percent. However, even among those who regard democracy as always preferable, there are as high as 72.3 percent of them opting for economic development if a choice between it and democracy is to be made. Equally interesting is that, among those indifferent to any political system, a particularly high proportion (89 percent) consider economic development as more important. With regards to those who think authoritarian governments can be preferable under some circumstances, 81.2 percent of them prefer economic development to democracy, which is close to the overall percentage distribution. A similar pattern is found in the relationship between the efficient government and desirability of democracy. The proportion of respondents opting for a government that is efficient but not democratic enough range from 77.4 percent to 86.6 percent across varying preference for democracy (Table 3).

Although the people of Hong Kong care about the efficiency of the executive, they also respect the rule of law, an intrinsic element of democracy. Again, this finding reflects the ambivalence embedded in their democratic culture. Table 4 shows that only a small section of respondents somewhat or strongly agree with the view that the Hong Kong government can disregard law when solving big problems (21.2 percent), and that the end is more important than the means for political leaders (15 percent). However, opinions are divided as to whether or not judges should accept views of the executive in important cases (44.7 percent) and whether or not government can accomplish its tasks if constantly checked on by the legislature (44.3 percent).

In this light, in Hong Kong, the obstacle to public commitment to democracy is likely the obsessive concerns about economic development and government efficiency. As a matter of fact, a widely held view of depoliticizing Hong Kong, prevalent especially after 1997, is that Hong Kong should be "an economic city" instead of "a political city," which presumes that Hong Kong survives through its economic achievement and through its success in repressing the emergence of politics. This view affirms the vision of the Hong Kong people as economic animals and sees society's primary goal as enabling economic activities to flourish. By the same token, demands for a faster pace of democratization are criticized for their "malicious" motives. Hong Kong's people are often warned against too much democracy, suggesting that this will achieve nothing but an inefficient government. Also, it is claimed that there is no place

within a democratic political system for resolving the polarization that necessarily accompanies economic development.[17] Despite the fact that contradictions between democracy, economic development, and efficiency are not always true, they are very real to our respondents.

If democracy is not desired for its capability in achieving economic development and efficiency, and solving social problems, what is appealing in democracy? As democracy is overwhelmingly defined by our respondents as freedom, rights, social equality and justice, it is possible that for them these political values are the chief attraction. Although drawn to these political values, the people's commitment to democracy is conditional, delivered only if democracy, defined as freedom and rights, is not in conflict with economic development and efficiency concerns. As a result, democracy is desired as an ideal but not considered always suitable. This discovery points to the ambivalence embedded in Hong Kong's democratic culture, and the importance of resolving this prevalent ambivalence about the inter-relationship of democracy, economic development, and efficiency in order to cultivate a more perfect commitment to democracy among the people of Hong Kong.

Considered in total, our respondents' various views of democracy measured by the scale of popular commitment to democracy,[18] we find that democracy in Hong Kong has both supporters (49.4 percent) and opponents (14.9 percent). The scale of popular commitment to democracy shown in Table 5 indicates that, on the whole, supporters considerably outnumber opponents.

Worthy of note, 15.8% (128) out of the total number of supporters are skeptical supporters. This group consists of those respondents who reject all the four authoritarian alternatives. Among them, 94.4 percent want democracy (giving six through ten on a ten-point scale) and 72.4 percent believe democracy suitable (giving six through ten on a ten-point scale). However, almost all of them (99 percent) do not consider democracy always preferable to authoritarianism or care about whether or not government is democratic. Further, 90 percent of them prefer economic development to democracy, and all of them think that democracy cannot solve social problems.

Around one-third of respondents (35.7 percent) are classified as "people with split views." A close analysis of this category reveals that among the 289 respondents, around 41 percent of them reject none or one of the four authoritarian alternatives. These people are removed from

the category of supporters of democracy. Another 59 percent reject two or three of the authoritarian alternatives. Upon further analysis, this group is found to exhibit a similar level of aspiration for democracy in the overall distribution. A slightly lower proportion of them consider democracy suitable (giving eight through ten on a ten-point scale). Also, a higher proportion of the respondents in this group indicate that they do not care whether or not government is democratic. Lastly, relatively more respondents in this group believe that democracy cannot solve social problems and prefer economic development to democracy. Overall, they are not classifiable under the present parameters. For instance, although some of them reject three authoritarian alternatives and thus are potentially classifiable according to the present definition, they, however, can meet only one of the three other specified criteria of giving positive responses to questions of desirability, suitability and priority of democracy. It can be postulated that this is the group most ambivalent about democracy and, hence, do not maintain a thoroughgoing democratic stance in their answers.

So, the commitment to democracy always depends on the strength of competing alternatives. Why is there an ambivalent commitment? The above discussion demonstrates that this ambivalence is probably constituted by the hegemony of political discourses, particularly the discourse of "prosperity and stability" and "let's be an economic city, not a political city" which have become leitmotiv for Hong Kong's development. The cultural obsession with pragmatic orientations in the territory has helped to sustain the hegemony of the discourse.

Overall, the local conception of democracy is a crossbreed of western individualism, colonial experience and Chinese traditionalism. The people in Hong Kong aspire to democracy and reject authoritarian alternatives of governance. Democracy is loved not for its capability in solving social problems, but rather for its embedded values of freedom, rights and justice, and representation of *min-ben* governance. However, democracy is not always considered the most suitable. In some circumstances, it can be overridden. The above discussion unravels the ambivalence in Hong Kong's democratic culture and the importance of the competing values of economic development and efficiency for the people of Hong Kong. These findings show that, although the people's commitment to democracy is not unconditional, it has enormous potential for growth if sufficient steps can be taken to resolve the prevalent ambivalence concerning democracy versus economic development and efficiency.

Perceptions of Democratic Progress and Regime Performance

Given that our respondents define democracy as freedom and liberty, rights, social justice, and government for the people (*min-ben*), how do they compare the extent of democratization during the eras of Chris Patten and Tung Chee-hwa? Previous studies find that in Hong Kong political discontent strengthens rather than undermines the legitimacy of democracy as the best form of government under all circumstances.[19] So, is it possible that the people's discontent toward the Tung administration, accumulated since Hong Kong's transition, has reinforced their commitment to democracy? Before we address this question in the next section, let us first examine our respondents' views on democratic progress and regime performance.

As illustrated by Table 6, most of our respondents perceived no democratic progress since Hong Kong's return to China. About 60 percent of our respondents considered the political change as one of authoritarian reversal (40.9 percent) or authoritarian persistence (17.7 percent), although around one-third of them perceived a democratic continuity (33.1 percent), that both the governments of Patten and Tung are democratic.

Regarding the democratic performance of the governments of Patten and Tung (Chart 4), on a ten-point scale, the majority of respondents gave a score of six to eight (63.8 percent) or nine to ten (9.6 percent) to Patten's era, hence identifying it as a limited or a full/nearly full democracy. However, relatively less of them see Tung's government in the same terms. Only 37 percent of them see it as a limited democracy and another 2.9 percent a full/nearly full democracy. More of them, by scoring it between three and five, think it a soft/partially liberalized authoritarian regime (53.9 percent). Also, Tung's government attains a lower mean score (5.2, standard deviation: 1.78) than Patten's (6.6, standard deviation: 1.81). It is obvious that although our respondents do not consider Patten's government fully democratic, Tung's appears even less so. Also, the interruption of democratization upon the transition of sovereignty in Hong Kong certainly is not a positive indicator, given their aspirations for democracy. There is thus no wonder that 42.5 percent of our respondents expressed dissatisfaction in their evaluation of the ways democracy works in Hong Kong.[20]

On comparison, more respondents perceive deterioration than improvement in Tung's governance in seven major areas.[21] Government's political performance in all of the areas concerning democracy and the rule of law is perceived as worsening (Table 8). The dimension

of equal treatment by the government (-40.5 percent) receives the most negative assessment, followed by independence of judges (-30.5 percent), popular influence on the government (-21.4 percent), freedom of expression (-15.8 percent), and the freedom to join associations (-12.5 percent).

In a similar vein, Table 8 shows that a very unfavourable assessment of the present regime's policy performance is made on its economic performance (-87.5 percent). This item also gains the highest mean score of -1.31 on a five-point scale with -2 indicating the worst. Transparency of policy formation of the Hong Kong SAR government also experienced a significant decline (-30 percent) comparing with that of the Patten administration. Only in their ability to get rid of corruption are the present and the past government perceived as comparable. In this regard, the PDI records a tiny perceived improvement (+1.3 percent). Also, corruption at the government level is not considered widespread. The majority of respondents believe that not a lot of officials are corrupt (67.8 percent) or that hardly anyone is involved in corruption (8.3 percent).

To what extent and in what ways is the public assessment accurate? Sadly, the people's perceptions of negative change in democracy and the rule of law appear to be in accord with the reality, especially if we take into account the interruption in the progression to more democracy upon the transition in Hong Kong and the series of policy failures of the government after 1997. For example, the municipal councils, originally with a certain extent of direct election elements, were abolished. The move was interpreted as a deliberation of the government to decrease the political parties' influence on the district level and to centralize its power. Appointment system was restored in the district councils, which was originally abolished in the Patten administration. The function of the district councils was weakening. Because of the controversy on the right of abode stipulations in the Basic Law (regarding the right of abode of children of Hong Kong citizens who were born outside Hong Kong), the government invited the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to interpret the Basic Law. Also, the government has been denounced for its links with business elites. In 1999, the government's decision to give developing rights of the Cyberport project to Li Tzar-kai's PCCW was bitterly criticized for its surrender to cronyism. Some property developers said that they were excluded from the discussion before the project was announced. The government's series of attempts to push up prices of properties were believed to be in favor of property developers.

Equally true is the people's perception of economic deterioration. As a matter of fact, between 1997 and 2001, the rate of growth of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had been on the decrease. The GDP in 1998 represented an increase of 5.1 percent over the previous year. However, the 1999 GDP saw only a growth of 2.9 percent. Although in 2000, there was a rebound of 10.5 percent increase but in 2001, the rate of growth decreased to 0.1 percent. Put together, all of these figures plus the soaring rate of unemployment, 6.2 percent in 2001 and lately around 8 percent, substantiate that the public perception of economic deterioration is definitely well grounded.

From an outsider's point of view, the political rights enjoyed by the people in Hong Kong have been low. The Hong Kong during the period of 1997 to 2000 has persistently recorded a score of five or six on a seven-point scale, with seven reflecting the lowest, in the Freedom House Score on Political Rights and Civil Liberties.[22] Political discontent has been aggravated by social grievances. In 2000, the level of social inequality in Hong Kong reached new highs. The number of households whose monthly income fell below the median income reached 1,090,000, and the poverty rate had risen to 16.1 percent of the population from 11.7 percent in 1991.[23] The Gini Coefficient in Hong Kong was 0.525 as for 2001, ranking the territory as above only sixteen developing countries from South America and Africa in the world.[24]

Further correlation analyses[25] (Table 10) show that the respondents' satisfaction with how democracy works in Hong Kong is moderately, and positively, correlated to their satisfaction with Tung's government (0.376, at the 0.000 level, two-tailed). Also, there is moderate negative correlation (-0.298, at the 0.000 level, two-tailed) between the items of satisfaction with how democracy works in Hong Kong and the sum score of perceived change in democracy and rule of law. The negative correlation of these two items means that the more one feels dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Hong Kong, the more likely that he or she will perceive the performance of Tung's government in democracy and rule of law as worsening, and vice versa.[26]

Indeed, the situation in Hong Kong is alarming; we can hardly imagine what society will be like with a population that feels so frustrated by its government both politically and economically. It is thus no surprise that the Hong Kong people have relatively lower levels of trust in the Hong Kong government among the various institutions under study (Chart 5). The

Hong Kong government ranks the second lowest in terms of the amount of trust garnered (55.5 percent), <u>reflecting the public's general dissatisfaction with the government's performance as discussed</u>.[27]

Further, there is a moderate association between the variables of trust and satisfaction with the way democracy works (0.356, significant at the 0.000 level, two-tailed), and a relatively strong association between trust and satisfaction with Tung's government (0.474, significant at the 0.000 level, two-tailed).[28] Again, these findings illustrate that political trust, evaluations of the government, and the perceived performance of the government in democratization are associated (Table 11).

In fact, previous studies demonstrate that Hong Kong's people relatively approved the colonial form of government before 1997[29] and probably still have fond memory of it. Given the understanding of democracy as freedoms and liberties, and the colonial government had given the people all these, it is no surprise that it was accepted. Only those who understood democracy in institutional or procedural terms would be dissatisfied. On the contrary, because of the interruption in the progression to more democracy and the series of policy failures after 1997, the Hong Kong SAR government is rejected.

Regime Performance, Working of Democracy and Democratic Commitment

We asked in the above whether the people's discontent with the Tung administration reinforces their commitment to democracy. It should be noted that unlike other countries, the perception of no democratic progress but authoritarian reversal, poor performance or political discontent rather reinforces the desire for and commitment to a fuller democracy. The relationship between the scale of commitment to democracy and the perceptions of regime performance is evident (Tables 17 and 18). The more one perceives deterioration in (various aspects of) system performance, the more one supports democracy. In general, supporters of democracy tend to evaluate the government's performance during the past five years more negatively than the opponents. For example, concerning the independence of judges, a higher proportion of the strong supporters of democracy find no change and fewer of them consider the situation somewhat better. Contrarily, more respondents from the group of strong opponents of democracy would evaluate this area of performance for the Tung government as improving. In a similar vein, while more strong supporters hold that freedom of expression in Hong Kong

is decreasing, a lot more of the strong opponents see this as getting better. A similar pattern is also found in the rest of the tables comparing the scale of commitment to democracy and perceptions of regime performance.

The group of people with split views deserves some discussion. Although unclassified in their extent of support for liberal democracy, the respondents of this group appear to share many of the views of the opponents of democracy. For instance, relatively more of those in this group believe that judges have become more independent during the past few years. Similarly, more of them think that the government has become somewhat fairer than before. A higher proportion of them rate the freedom to join organizations as improving. And relatively fewer respondents in this group rate economic development as much worse. Overall, the group of split views tends to make a relatively positive assessment of regime performance, similar to that of the opponents of democracy.

The scale of commitment to democracy relates to the levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works in Hong Kong (Table 14). The overall percentages of respondents indicating satisfaction or dissatisfaction are 57.6 percent and 42.4 percent respectively. A higher proportion of the strong supporters are found to feel less satisfied with the way democracy works (54.9 percent), as contrasted to a higher proportion of the weak opponents who feel satisfied (70.4 percent). Both the strong supporters and strong opponents are least satisfied with the way democracy works while weak opponents and people holding split views are relatively satisfied with Hong Kong's limited democracy. While the strong supporters might feel unhappy with the system's undemocratic features, the strong opponents are likely unhappy with the conflicts and disarrays that the territory's democratic process has brought about.

Socio-economic Correlates of Democratic Commitment

Several demographic factors are found to relate to the levels of commitment to democracy. People with higher levels of education tend to be more supportive of democracy (Table 15). We find in the category of strong supporters relatively fewer respondents with only primary educational levels and more with senior secondary and university levels as well as vocational training. By the same token, relatively more of those moderate and skeptical supporters are of university educational standard. With regards to the strong opponents, more of them have received only a primary education. Again noteworthy, more respondents of the category of

"split views" are illiterate or have only a primary education.

What is the relationship between commitment to democracy and age? Supporters of democracy tend to be younger. More of them are found between the ages of 20 to 39. Strong opponents tend to be older, with a higher concentration between ages of 40 to 49, and 60 to 69. An interesting note about the respondents of "others": there tend to be more of them from the age groups of 50 to 69, and even 70 or above.

A higher proportion of the strong, moderate and skeptical supporters of democracy earn a monthly household income of HK $25,000 or above. The percentages are 36.8 percent, 31.9 percent, and 41.7 percent respectively. The overall percentage of respondents who have a monthly household income of this level is only 27.9 percent. Opponents of democracy are found to earn less. More respondents of the group of weak opponents have a household income between HK $15,000 and HK $24,999. The percentage is 38.8 percent, as compared to the overall percentage, which is 25.4. Relatively more strong opponents report a monthly household income below HK $15,000, that is, 54.7 percent compared with the overall percentage of 46.7. The people with split views earn even less, with a lot more of them recording a monthly household income of HK $8,000 or below.

It appears evident that those born in Hong Kong tend to be more supportive of democracy than those who were not. The percentages of strong, moderate and skeptical supporters born in Hong Kong are 61.3 percent, 67.5 percent, and 64.8 percent respectively. The overall percentage of respondents born in Hong Kong is only 54.1 percent. Also, a higher proportion of those in the group of holding split views were not born in Hong Kong (60.8 percent).

In sum, supporters of democracy are likely to be those who evaluate Tung's governance unfavorably and feel less satisfied with the way democracy works during the past few years. Also, they tend to be better educated, younger, relatively well off in terms of their monthly household income, and were born locally. The group classified as holding split views in the scale of commitment to democracy, which likely consists of those mostly ambivalent, tends to be less educated, much older in age, and earn much less each month. Also, more of them were born outside of Hong Kong.

Prospects for Expanding the Partial Democracy

It is true that the prospects for expanding Hong Kong's partial democracy is uncertain, partly due to the China factor and the local understanding of democracy predominantly in liberal terms which might render the convergence of the processes of liberalization and democratization difficult. Another factor also influential in Hong Kong's case relates to the extreme political disempowerment felt by the local people. Almost all respondents somewhat or strongly disagree that they have the ability to participate in politics (96.2 percent). A large majority of them regard politics and government too complicated for them (83.8 percent). Political scientists are interested in the way an unresponsive political regime effects the sense of political inefficacy in its people, and Hong Kong will be a case in point. A great majority of respondents somewhat or strongly agree to the statements that government is run by a powerful few (73.9 percent), and that people like them have no influence on the government (83.8 percent).[30]

How would a people react if they feel persistently politically thwarted? The study shows that our respondents in general feel pessimistic about democratic development in Tung's government during the next five years. The respondents' ratings of the extent of democratization in the present regime and in five years are analyzed. The mean score attained by the present regime is 5.2 (standard deviation: 1.78) while the score expected in five years is 5.9 (standard deviation: 2.09), with one representing complete dictatorship and ten complete democracy. The people in Hong Kong expect only a little democratic progress in five years.

Another table presents the frequency of the seven types of expectations of democratic development (Table 16). There are 39.3 percent of the respondents fall into the category that expects authoritarian persistence, meaning that they gave both the present regime and that of five years later a score lower or equal to five. Another 29.6 percent belong to the group that expects struggling democracy, and 19.5 percent to the group that expects limited democratic transition. Both of the latter categories of respondents view the future extent of democracy as somewhere around six to eight on a ten-point scale. There are 5.3 percent of respondents who are relatively optimistic regarding Hong Kong as a developing democracy, and who give the future Hong Kong nine thru ten. However, this is not the major trend. Overall, these findings are consistent with what we have discussed about the people's political efficacy and their evaluation of the government's performance during the past five years.

Despite of the unfavorable factors mentioned above, several recent developments might make us feel cautiously optimistic toward the prospects for democratization in Hong Kong. First of all, public trust in domestic political institutions is declining while trust in the central government is going up. A growing mutual trust between the people of Hong Kong and the central government could make a change in Beijing's mind toward democratization in Hong Kong a bit easier, even though the central government is still very concerned about the nature of the democratic camp, and the protection of the capitalist interests in Hong Kong.

Secondly, although feeling politically powerless, the people of Hong Kong do want to change their political system and government for the better. From their aspiration for democracy, their love for the political virtues such as freedom and justice, and their critique of the governance of Tung's regime, we see that democracy is no longer of marginal value in Hong Kong. Democracy is high on the people's agenda even though they do not envision themselves with a great enough capability for achieving it. In fact, we may envisage that the demand for a more rapid pace of democratization will become more overt after the massive protest in the territory on July 1, 2003. Through this collective experience, the sense of powerlessness of the people is changing for the better.

Thirdly, the July 1 protest and its aftermath have awakened the middle class and the younger generation, who understand the importance of participation. Pressures for further democratization have built up; and some elements of the conservative business sector seem to be becoming more sympathetic. The remaining requirement is political leadership that can bring all stakeholders together for building a consensus on the reform steps ahead. Political elites and parties are trying to seize the initiative, the Hong Kong SAR government is still defining its role, the legislative assembly is monitoring the development, and the Beijing government is changing its position from watching with concern to intervention with discretion.

Conclusion

Democracy is not a side dish. For the people of Hong Kong, it is a political system heartily aspired to. It embodies the political values they treasure. The above discussion evidences the people's attachment to liberal values and strong substantive demand on the

government to be *min-ben*, manifested by a great number who aspire to a democracy that means government for the people. Further, democracy signifies what is meant by a good political system and quality governance for the people. The intricate associations found between political trust, evaluations of the government, and the perceived performance of the government in democratization testify to this argument. On the whole, supporters of democracy are likely to be those who are better educated, younger, relatively well off in terms of their monthly household income, and who were born locally.

However, the people's commitment to democracy is ambivalent, as some may not find democracy always suitable and preferable due to their concerns about possible conflicts between democratization, economic development, and governance efficiency. In addition, they feel politically powerless, which is aggravated by the non-responsiveness of the government and the worsening conditions of democracy and rule of law during Tung's era. This study uncovers enormous political frustration among the people, part and parcel of their political experience during the enforced detour to partial democracy over the past years.

What is keeping nascent democracy away from becoming a full democracy in Hong Kong? Apart from the external factors unique to Hong Kong that have contributed considerably to the interruptions in democratization in Hong Kong, the general population's ambivalent commitment and sense of political powerlessness are no doubt additional reasons. This study points to the importance of resolving the prevalent ambivalence about the interactivity of democracy, economic development, and efficiency. Also, commitment to democracy will probably grow if the people can be empowered, both ideologically in terms of their understanding about the intrinsic value of democracy and practically with regards to their political influence. They will then see themselves as holding more power to achieve their political ideals.

Table 1

The Understandings of Democracy

Meaning	Frequency	Percent of cases
1. Freedom and liberty	390	60.7
2. In other abstract and positive terms	124	19.3
3. Social equality and justice	116	18.1
4. In generic or populist terms	105	16.4
5. Political rights, institutions and process	75	11.7
6. In negative terms	54	8.5
7. Good government	35	5.4
8. Market economy	8	1.2
9. Others	89	13.9
Total responses	996	155.2

Note: The respondents can give up to three answers; 642 valid cases; 169 missing cases.

Chart 1
Level of Understanding of Liberal Democracy
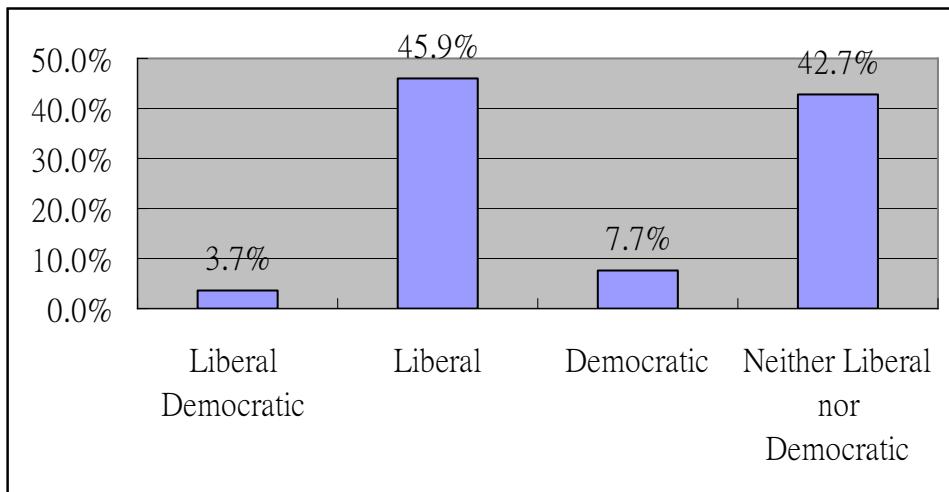
Note: 642 valid cases; 169 missing cases.

Chart 2
Desirability and Suitability of Democracy
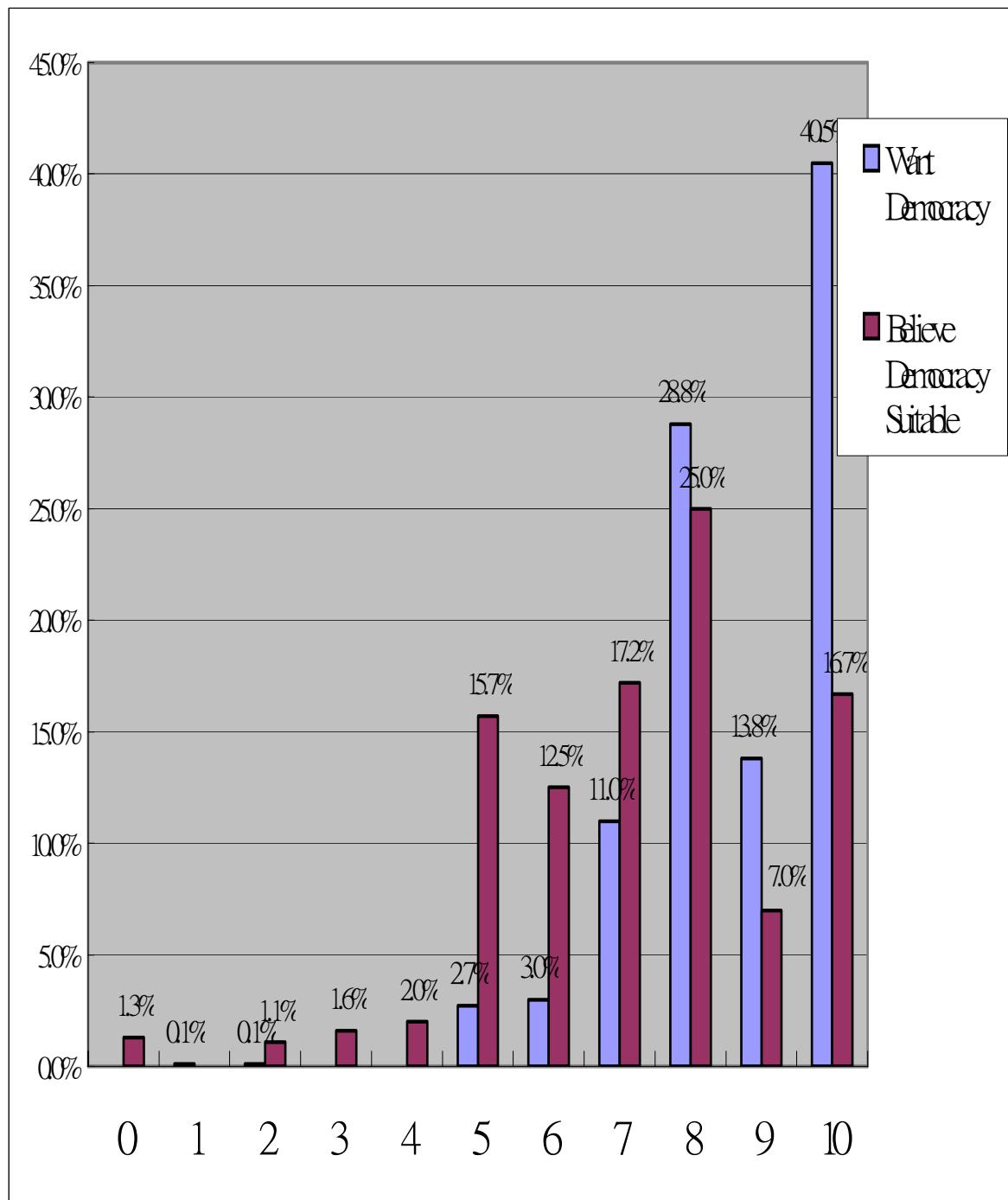
Note: 732 valid cases for "want democratic progress," and 691 for "believe democracy suitable."

Table 2
Preference, Priority and Efficacy

| Countries	Democracy is always preferable to any other kinds of government (percent)	Democracy is much more/more important than economic development (percent)	Democracy can solve social problems (percent)
Hong Kong	45.7	9	47.4
Taiwan	40.4	10.6	46.8
China	53.9	22.2	60.4
Philippines	64	19.8	61
Japan	68.5	32.2	63.1
Korea	49	19	72
Thailand	84.3	16.7	90.8
Mongolia	54.9	26.6	76.3

Table 3
Democracy, Economic Development, Efficiency and Whether Democracy can Solve Social Problems

Whether democracy is always preferable	Economic development is much more / more important	Preferred an efficient but insufficiently democratic government	Democracy cannot solve social problems
	Percent of row		
Democracy is always preferable to any other kinds of government	72.3 (N=322)	80 (N=270)	41.4 (N=295)
Under some circumstances, authoritarian governments can be preferable	81.2 (N=128)	86.6 (N=112)	64.4 (N=118)
It does not matter to me whether government is democratic or not	89 (N=255)	77.4 (N=195)	60.6 (N=213)
Column total	705	577	626

Table 4
The Rule of Law and Constraints on Power

Item	Strongly or somewhat agree		Total
	Frequency	Percent	
Hong Kong government can disregard law when solving big problems	153	21.2	719
Judges should accept views of the executive in important cases	307	44.7	686
Government cannot accomplish its works if constantly checked on by the legislature	302	44.3	681
For political leaders, the end is more important than the means	110	15	729

Note: The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases.

Chart 3
Index of Support for Liberal Democracy

Mean = 2.4
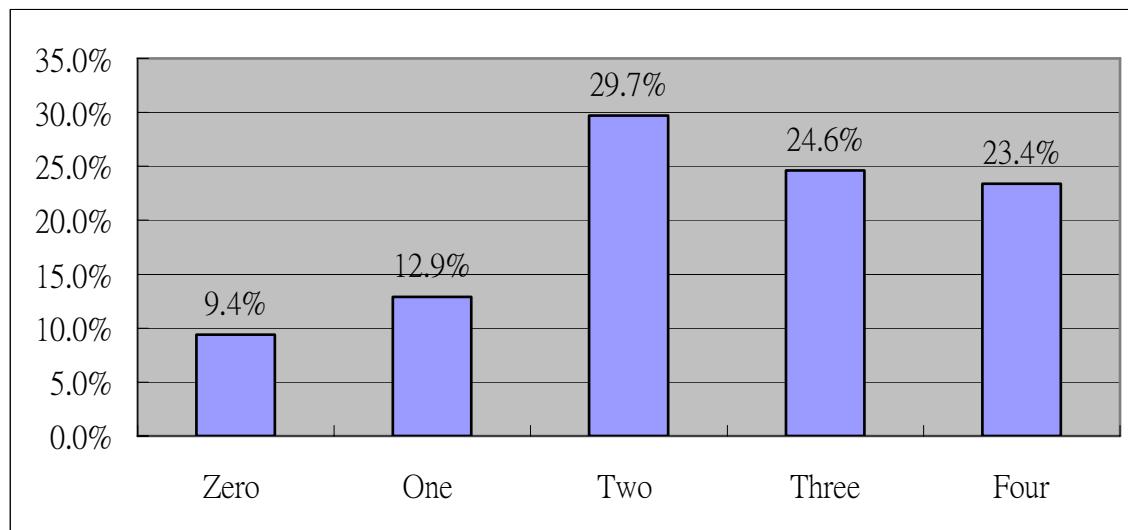
Note: The index was constructed by assigning one point to the democratic response to each of the items included in Table 4.

Table 5
The Scale of Popular Commitment to Democracy

Popular commitment	Frequency	Percent
Strong supporters	118	14.6
Moderate supporters	154	19
Skeptical supporters	128	15.8
People with split views	289	35.7
Weak opponents	73	9
Strong opponents	48	5.9
Total	811	100

Table 6
Perceived Patterns of Political Change in Regimes

Pattern	Frequency	Percent
Authoritarian reversal	285	40.9
Authoritarian persistence	123	17.7
Authoritarian liberalization	10	1.4
Limited democratic transition	42	6
Advanced democratic transition	6	0.9
Democratic continuity	230	33.1
Total	696	100

Note: 115 missing cases.

Chart 4

Extent of Democratization: Past and Present Regimes
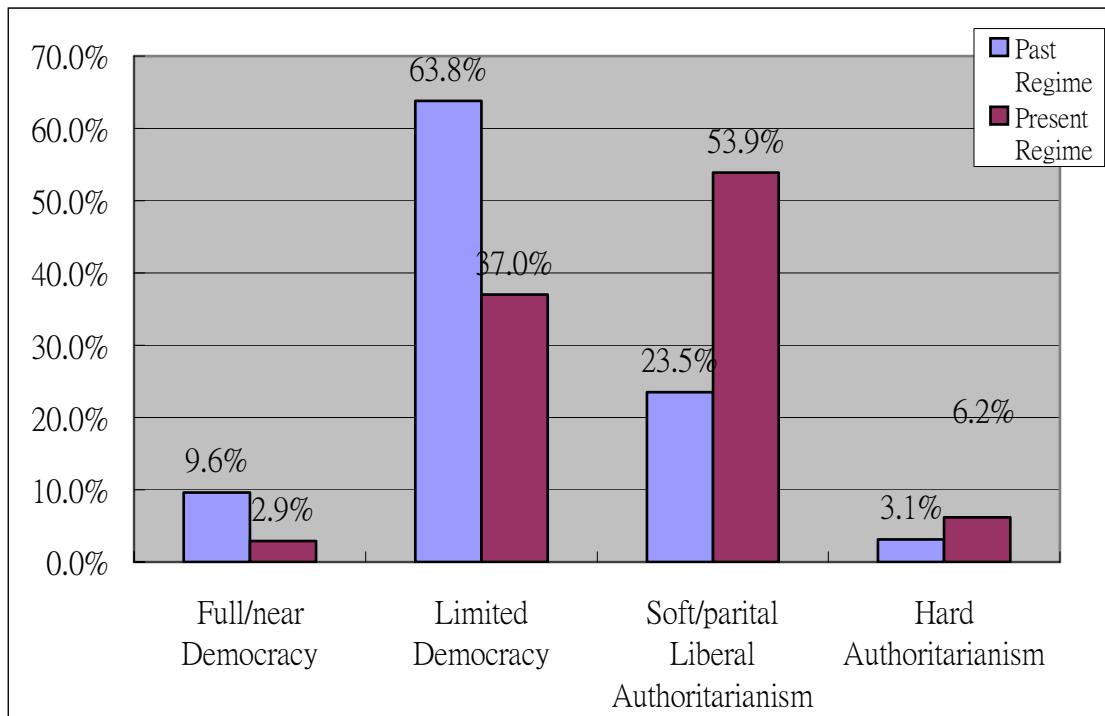
Note: 712 valid cases for "the past regime" and 724 "the present regime."

Table 7
Level of Understanding of Liberal Democracy and Perceptions of Democratic Change in Regimes

|	Past regime as a non-democracy		Present regime as a democracy	
	Percent	Mean score	Percent	Mean score
Liberal democratic	4.3	4.2	3.8	6.83
Liberal	34.4	4.55	44.5	6.93
Democratic	8.6	4.07	10.1	6.55
Neither	52.8	3.85	41.6	6.93
% (Total)	100 (163)		100 (238)	

Note: The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases and invalid cases.

Table 8
Perceptions of Political and Policy Performance of the Present Regime

	Mean score	SD	Percent perceiving negative change (a)	Percent perceiving positive change (b)	Total	PDI (b-a) (percent)
Political performance						
Freedom of expression	-0.16	0.77	34.1	18.3	744	-15.8
Freedom to join associations	-0.14	0.7	27.8	15.3	702	-12.5
Equal treatment by the government	-0.46	0.79	52.7	12.2	688	-40.5
Popular influence on the government	-0.26	0.69	31.4	10	634	-21.4
Independence of judges	-0.34	0.8	44.1	13.6	633	-30.5
Average scores for political performance	-0.27	0.75	38	13.9		-24.1
Policy performance						
Transparency of policy formation	-0.36	0.88	48.9	18.9	670	-30
Ability to get rid of corruption	-0.00	0.81	25	26.3	701	+1.3
Economic performance	-1.31	0.74	90.9	3.4	794	-87.5
Average scores for policy performance	-0.56	0.81	54.6	16.2		-38.7

Note: The values of mean score, ranging from –2 to +2, indicate the level of perceived change of political and policy performance of the present regime. PDI is the Percentage Differential Index whose values range from –100 to +100. The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases.

Chart 5
Trust in Institutions
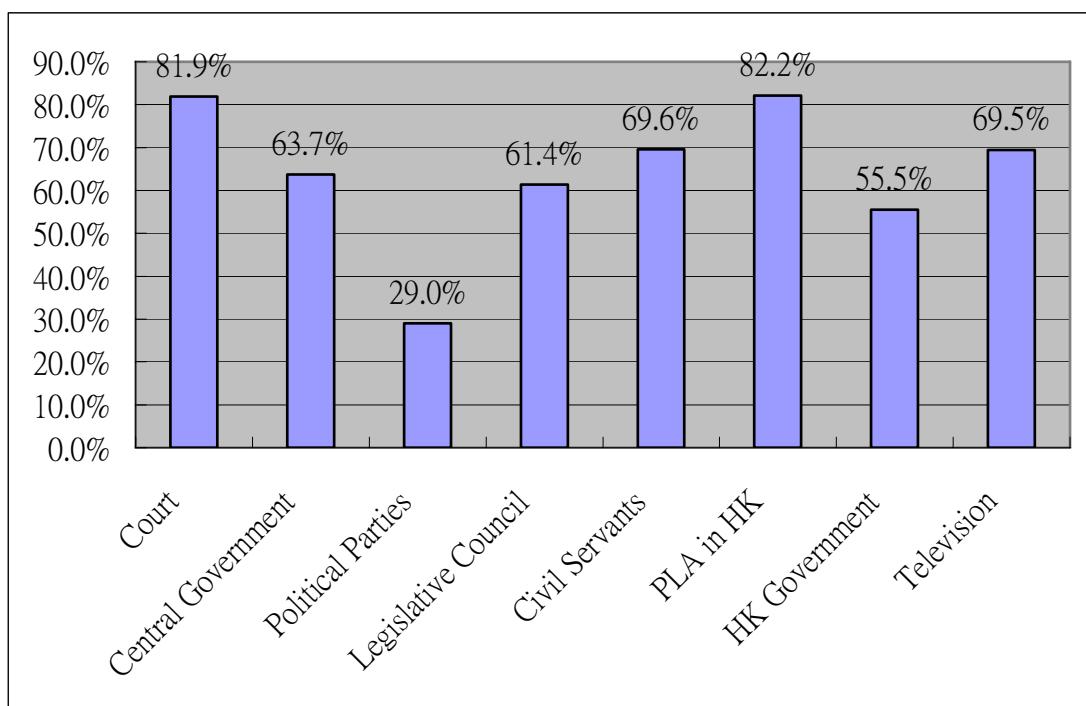
Note: 686 valid cases for "court," 715 for "central government," 619 for "political parties," 684 for "Legislative Council," 693 for "civil servants," 620 for "PLA in Hong Kong," 733 for "Hong Kong government," and 711 for "television."

Table 9
Gender, Age, Education, Income, Birthplace and Perceived Democratic Change in Regimes

		Percent perceiving democratic change (Total no. of cases)
Gender	Male	3.3 (27)
	Female	2.5 (20)
Age	20-39	1.7 (14)
	40-59	2.1 (17)
	60 and above	1.6 (13)
Education	(1) Illiterate (2) Received no formal education (3) Primary education not completed / completed	1.4 (11)
	(1) Junior secondary school education not completed / completed (2) Senior secondary school education not completed / completed	3.7 (30)
	(1) Vocational education (2) University education not completed	0.5 (4)
	(1) University education completed (2) Graduate level (3) Associate degree level	0.4 (3)
Income	Below $8,000	1.6 (13)
	$8,000 - $14,999	1.4 (11)
	$15,000 - $24,999	1.1 (9)
	$25,000 - $39,999	0.9 (7)
	$40,000 and above	0.1 (1)
Birthplace	Born outside Hong Kong	3.2 (26)
	Born in Hong Kong	2.6 (21)

Note: The total number of cases is 811. Only 47 respondents perceive the previous regime as undemocratic (scoring it between one and five on a ten-point scale) <u>AND</u> the present regime as democratic (scoring it between six and ten on a ten-point scale).

Table 10
Satisfaction with the Way Democracy Works and Relevant Variables

Item	Pearson correlation	Sig. (two-tailed)
Years of formal education	0.164	0.000
Age	-0.124	0.002
Monthly household income	0.145	0.000
Evaluation of the economy today	0.153	0.000
Evaluation of the economy over the past five years	0.143	0.000
Satisfaction with Tung's government	0.376	0.000
Sum score of perceived change in democracy and rule of law	-0.298	0.000
Perception of government performance in getting rid of corruption	-0.2	0.000
Perception of corruption in the government	0.046	0.271

Note: The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases.

Table 11
The Scale of Trust and Relevant Variables

Item	Pearson correlation	Sig. (two-tailed)
Satisfaction with Tung's government	0.474	0.000
Satisfaction with the way democracy works	0.356	0.000
Years of formal education	0.036	0.413
Age	-0.054	0.222
Monthly household income	0.012	0.79
Frequency of following politics in the media	-0.033	0.443

Note: The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases.

Table 12
Commitment to Democracy and Perceptions of Political Performance of the Present Regime

Commitment to democracy	Freedom of expression	Freedom to join associations	Equal treatment	Popular influence	Independence of judges
	Percent perceiving much / somewhat worse				
Strong supporters	42.9 (N=119)	38.8 (N=116)	63.7 (N=113)	32.7 (N=104)	37.1 (N=108)
Moderate supporters	38.2 (N=149)	30.8 (N=146)	62.2 (N=143)	31.9 (N=135)	48.1 (N=131)
Skeptical supporters	26.8 (N=127)	21.3 (N=122)	56.3 (N=119)	34.6 (N=107)	40.5 (N=116)
People with split views	31.9 (N=238)	24.6 (N=211)	42.3 (N=206)	28 (N=186)	48.1 (N=179)
Weak opponents	36.2 (N=69)	26.1 (N=69)	47.8 (N=67)	36.5 (N=63)	39.4 (N=61)
Strong opponents	25 (N=44)	25 (N=40)	39 (N=41)	25.6 (N=39)	50 (N=38)

Note: The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases.

Table 13
Commitment to Democracy and Perceptions of Policy Performance of the Present Regime

Commitment to democracy	Transparency of policy formation	Ability to get rid of corruption	Economic performance
	Percent perceiving much / somewhat worse		
Strong supporters	51.3 (N=115)	33.1 (N=112)	94.1 (N=118)
Moderate supporters	54.3 (N=149)	16 (N=144)	94.1 (N=154)
Skeptical supporters	48.8 (N=119)	23.4 (N=124)	96.8 (N=127)
People with split views	42.4 (N=184)	28.3 (N=212)	85.9 (N=277)
Weak opponents	58.7 (N=63)	21.2 (N=66)	82.6 (N=69)
Strong opponents	38.1 (N=42)	28.6 (N=42)	95.9 (N=48)

Note: The total number of cases is 811 including the missing cases.

Table 14
Commitment to Democracy and Satisfaction with the Way Democracy Works

Commitment to democracy	Satisfaction with the way democracy works				
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Row total (percent of column)
	Percent of row				
Strong supporters	0.9	44.2	46.9	8	113 (16.7)
Moderate supporters	2.8	52.4	41.3	3.5	143 (21.2)
Skeptical supporters	0.9	58.4	38.9	1.8	113 (16.7)
People with split views	2	61	33.7	3.4	205 (30.4)
Weak opponents	1.6	68.8	28.1	1.6	64 (9.5)
Strong opponents	5.4	43.2	43.2	8.1	37 (5.5)
Column total	13	376	259	27	675
Percent of row	1.9	55.7	38.4	4	(100)

Note: 136 missing cases.

Table 15
Education, Age, Income, Birthplace and Commitment to Democracy

		Commitment to democracy					
		Strong supporters	Moderate supporters	Skeptical supporters	People with split views	Weak opponents	Strong opponents
		Percent of row					
Age	20-39	61.6	52	45.2	32.3	53.5	25
	40-59	28.6	37.5	39.7	34.4	39.4	54.5
	60 and above	9.8	10.5	15.1	33.3	7	20.5
	N	112	152	126	279	71	44
Education	Group A	14.4	20.9	18	53.5	23.3	56.5
	Group B	52.5	49.7	54.7	39.9	65.8	32.6
	Group C	16.9	13.1	8.6	1.7	5.5	6.5
	Group D	16.1	16.3	18.8	4.9	5.5	4.3
	N	118	153	128	288	73	46
Income	Below $8,000	12.3	15.2	8.3	33.6	10.4	21.4
	$8,000 - $14,999	26.4	25.4	24.2	29	25.4	33.3
	$15,000 - $24,999	24.5	27.5	25.8	21.2	38.8	21.4
	$25,000 - $39,999	20.8	20.3	19.2	9.5	19.4	11.9
	$40,000 and above	16	11.6	22.5	6.6	6	11.9
	N	106	138	120	241	67	42
Birthplace	Born outside HK	38.7	32.5	35.2	60.8	43.8	48.9
	Born in HK	61.3	67.5	64.8	39.2	56.2	51.1
	N	119	154	128	288	73	47

Note: Education group A: (1) Illiterate (2) Received no formal education (3) Primary education not completed / completed; group B: (1) Junior secondary school education not completed / completed (2) Senior secondary school education not completed / completed; group C: (1) Vocational education (2) University education not completed; group D: (1) University education completed (2) Graduate level (3) Associate degree level.

Table 16
Expectations for the Future of Democracy

Type of expectation	Frequency	Percent
Authoritarian persistence	228	39.3
Authoritarian reversal	14	2.5
Limited democratic transition	113	19.5
Advanced democratic transition	12	2.2
Struggling democracy	172	29.6
Developing democracy	31	5.3
Consolidating (maturing) democracy	10	1.7
Total	580	100

Note: 231 missing cases.

Notes

[1] See, for example, Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, 1988. *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press; Lau and Kuan, 1995. "The Attentive Spectators: Political Participation of the Hong Kong Chinese," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, 14, 1, spring, 3-24; Lam Wai-man, 2003. "An Alternative Understanding of Political Participation: Challenging the Myth of Political Indifference in Hong Kong," *International Journal of Public Administration*, 26, 5, 473-496.

[2] This paper is largely based on findings from a sample survey carried out from September 21 to November 20, 2001. The representative household sample of adults aged eighteen and above was conducted in multiple-stages. From the 1,651 valid individual samples, 811 successful face-to-face interviews took place, yielding a success rate of 49.1 percent, which is quite normal in Hong Kong. Unless otherwise indicated, all frequency distributions refer to valid percents with missing values excluded from analysis. The analysis was conducted with the variable of age weighted.

[3] By this we refer to the situation where Hong Kong has long enjoyed the rule of law and the benefits of civil liberties. However, it has not yet attained the minimalist requirement of democracy, which is the formation of government by democratic election.

[4] The Urban Council and the Regional Council were the same in structure and function but responsible for the administration of different geographical districts. They were abolished in 1999.

[5] Lo Shiu-hing, 1995. *The Politics of Democratization in Hong Kong*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, Introduction; Kuan Hsin-chi, 1991. "Power Dependence and Democratic Transition: The Case of Hong Kong," *China Quarterly*, 128, 774-793, Dec.

[6] The Basic Law is the constitutional document of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

[7] Lam Wai-man, 2004. *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

[8] See, for example, Li Pang-kwong, 2000. *Hong Kong from Britain to China: Political Cleavages, Electoral Dynamics and Institutional Changes*. England: Ashgate.

[9] See, for example, Lau Siu-kai, 1998. *Democratization, Poverty of Political Leaders, and Political Inefficacy in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

[10] See, for example, Ronald Inglehart, 1997. *Modernization and Post-modernization*. Princeton: NJ University Press, chapter 6, quoted in Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai 2002. "Between Liberal Autocracy and Democracy: Democratic Legitimacy in Hong Kong," *Democratization*, 9, 4, winter, 60.

[11] Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai, "Between Liberal Autocracy and Democracy: Democratic Legitimacy in Hong Kong," *Democratization*, vol. 9, no. 4, winter 2002, pp. 59, 65. See also Jose Ramon Montero, Richard Gunther and Mariano Torcal, 1997. "Democracy in Spain: Legitimacy, Discontent, and Disaffection," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 32, 3, 124-160.

[12] Lo, *The Politics of Democratization in Hong Kong*, 2-4; Guilermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, 1986. *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.

[13] Answers to the meaning of democracy that cover both freedom or liberty, and institutional or procedural dimensions are classified as "liberal democratic" understandings. The category of "liberal" understandings includes the answers concerning only ideas of freedom or liberty, whereas "democratic" understanding refers to conceptions of democracy as purely institutional

or procedural. Answers that fall beyond the said categories are classified as "neither liberal nor democratic."

[14] The authoritarian alternatives are hypothetical because, unlike other countries, Hong Kong did not experience real authoritarian rule.

[15] Relatively more respondents who think that democracy is always preferable also regard it as capable of solving social problems (58.6 percent). For those who prefer authoritarian governments in some circumstances or are indifferent, the percentages are 35.6 percent and 39.4 percent respectively. There is an interesting affinity in the views of the latter two groups of respondents, which deserves further analysis.

[16] More of those who prefer democracy under all conditions also opt for a democratic government over an authoritative one (60.1 percent), as compared to the choice of an authoritarian but not democratic government of a relatively higher proportion of those who prefer authoritarianism in some circumstances.

[17] Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong*.

[18] Respondents who satisfy all the following conditions are classified as strong supporters of democracy: (1) Reject the four authoritarian alternatives, including: (a) abolish the Legislative Council and elections, let a strong leader decide all; (b) opposition party should not be allowed to compete for political power; (c) let the army rule Hong Kong; and (d) abolish the Legislative Council and elections, let experts decide all; (2) Meet all the following criteria: (a) give six through ten on at least one of the scales indicating respectively the degree of democracy wanted and the suitability of democracy as believed; (b) believe that democracy is always preferable; and (c) prefer democracy to economic development and/or believe democracy capable of solving problems. Moderate supporters reject the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet only two of the three criteria of the second condition. Skeptical supporters reject the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet only one or none of the criteria of the second condition. Weak opponents of democracy accept only one of the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet at least two of the criteria of the second condition. Strong opponents accept two or more of the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet none or only one of the criteria of the second condition. People with split views are those who fall into none of the above categories.

[19] Kuan and Lau, Between Liberal Autocracy and Democracy, 68.

[20] We encounter divisions of opinion in this regard. A simple majority of respondents (57.5 percent) expressed satisfaction toward the way democracy works in Hong Kong. The mean score is 2.45 (standard deviation: 0.6), which signifies this division.

[21] We did not ask the respondents to compare the performance of the past and present governments in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, and maintenance of social order. However, we collected their views of the transparency of policy process.

[22] During the period of 1997-2000, Hong Kong was rated as partly free (6,3 PF or 5,3 PF). "PF" represents a state of partly free. The former score indicates the extent of political rights enjoyed by the people and the latter civil liberties. Hong Kong got "4,3 PF" or "5,3 PF" from the 1980s to 1997. Regarding the extent of freedom, Hong Kong has all along received a "3."

[23] Refer to Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2001. *Submissions to the Panel on Welfare Services*, *the Legislative Council of the HKSAR*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Council of Social Service; Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2001. *Hong Kong 2001 Population Census Thematic Report*. Available on http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/eng/news/01c/01c_index.html.

[24] The World Bank, 2001. *2001 World Development Indicators*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank, Table 2.8.

[25] Which variables have constituted the levels of satisfaction? Relevant variables are analyzed, including years of formal education, age, monthly household income, evaluation of the economy today, evaluation of the economy over the past five years, the satisfaction with Tung's

government, the sum score of perceived change in democracy and rule of law, perception of government performance in getting rid of corruption, and perception of corruption in the government (Table 10). Almost all correlations are significant at the 0.05 level or below (two-tailed) except for the item of perception of corruption in the government. Significant correlations run from as small as -0.124 (age) to as large as 0.376 (satisfaction with Tung's government). In addition, the satisfaction with the way democracy works in Hong Kong appears to relate to their birthplace. More of those whose birthplace is not Hong Kong feel satisfied or very satisfied with the way democracy works (69.5 percent), as compared to those born in Hong Kong (48.7 percent). This appears logical as the above discussion shows that supporters of democracy tend to have born locally.

[26] The values of the former item range from one to four with one indicating "very satisfied" and four "very dissatisfied." The sum score of perceived change in democracy and rule of law is computed with the numerical conversion by which "-2" represents much worse, "-1" somewhat worse, "0" much the same, "1" somewhat better, and "2" much better.

[27] Also noteworthy, the percentage of trust in political parties is alarmingly low (29 percent), which helps explain the weakness of partisanship in Hong Kong. Ironically, there are relatively high degrees of trust in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Hong Kong (82.2 percent) and the central government (63.7 percent). A great majority of respondents vest trust in the courts (81.9 percent), testifying to the prevalent belief in the rule of law among the people of Hong Kong. Some institutions or groups also have the trust of a majority of respondents, including television (69.5 percent), civil servants (69.6 percent), and the Legislative Council (61.4 percent). A scale of trust in democratic institutions was constructed by combining items of trust for court, the central government, political parties, the Legislative Council, and the Hong Kong SAR government. Overall, the scale of trust in the institutions of court, the central government, political parties, the Legislative Council, and the Hong Kong government, shows that relatively more responses go to the value of "11" (21 percent), followed by "10" (17.5 percent) and "12" (16.2 percent). The scale ranges from five to twenty points, with a higher score indicating more trust.

[28] The variables examined include the satisfaction with Tung's government, the satisfaction with the way democracy works, years of formal education, age, monthly household income, and frequency of following politics in the media.

[29] The following figures collected from previous studies testify to our argument. In a 1995 study, 63.5 percent of respondents agree to the statement of "although the current political system is imperfect, it is still the best under the circumstances." In other studies conducted in 1985 and 1990, 74 percent and 59 percent of respondents indicate agreement to this statement respectively.

[30] The above four items were grouped into two summary measures. While one indicates the level of citizen empowerment, the other signifies the level of perception of system responsiveness. Each summary measure yields on an ordinal scale ranging from "-4" to "+4." A great majority of respondents are rated low ("0" to "-2") in reference to the citizen empowerment measure (84.8 percent) and the system responsiveness measure (85.4 percent). There is no question that the extent to which the people feel politically empowered directly relates to how responsive they see the system is. Our findings demonstrate this association. The more one finds the system unresponsive, the more likely he or she feels disempowered. The correlation between these two factors is 0.31, significant at the 0.000 level (two-tailed).

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